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Treasurer and Receiver General

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Department of the State Treasurer
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Request for Information
Office of the State Treasurer and Receiver General

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RFI File Number: **FLTF-MEFA RFI FIN LIT-EDUC-TECH 2012**
RFI Contact Person: Amelia Timbers

Entities responding to this Request for Information ("RFI") ("Respondents") are invited to respond to the inquiries in this document.

Responses to this RFI shall serve solely to assist the Commonwealth's Financial Literacy Trust Fund ("FLTF") and the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority ("MEFA") in understanding the current state of the marketplace with regard to the solicited information or to inform the development of a possible solicitation for a Request for Responses ("RFR") in the future. The Office of State Treasurer and Receiver General ("Treasury") has issued this RFI on behalf of both the FLTF and MEFA. However, the Treasury, the FLTF and MEFA, collectively and independently, make no assurance that an RFR will be issued at any later date as a result of the issuance of this RFI. The Treasury, the FLTF and MEFA, collectively and independently, are not obligated to issue any RFR as a result of the issuance of this RFI. The Treasury, on behalf of the FLTF and MEFA reserves the right to modify, amend, change, or cancel the terms of this RFI at any time.

The issuance of this RFI does not in any way obligate the Treasury, the FLTF or MEFA to issue or amend a solicitation or to include any of the RFI provisions or responses in any solicitation. Responding to this RFI is entirely voluntary and will in no way affect the consideration of any proposal submitted in response to any subsequent solicitation, nor will it serve as an advantage or disadvantage to the respondent in the course of any RFR that may be subsequently issued or amended.

Request For Information Pertaining To:
PURCHASE OF SERVICE STRATEGIC INITIATIVE FOR TECHNOLOGY
INTENDED FOR FINANCIAL EDUCATION

I. Overview

This is a Request for Information (RFI) solicited by the Office of State Treasurer and Receiver General (“Treasury”) on behalf of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Financial Literacy Trust Fund (“FLTF”) and the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority (“MEFA”). The FLTF and MEFA request information on a web-based financial education teaching and learning tool/module/curriculum, which can establish efficient, standard teaching, reporting & measurement practices that streamlines the delivery of financial education lessons and maximizes the application of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s frameworks.

The FLTF and MEFA are interested in learning what financial literacy tools are available to facilitate financial literacy education at all levels. The FLTF and MEFA would like feedback as to how it might best procure these services with the aim of a) identifying the specifics of what is available in this market to facilitate financial literacy at all levels, b) identifying maximum value and c) advice on structuring an RFR that is as easy to respond to as possible for the vendor community.

II. About the FLTF and MEFA

The Financial Literacy Trust Fund (“FLTF”) is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt entity that administered by the State Treasurer and Receiver-General (“Treasurer”) as Chair, in consultation with 20-member Board of Trustees (“FLTF Board”). See M.G.L. c. 10, §35QQ(a)-(b). The purpose and mission of the FLTF is to “encourage financial literacy and education for residents, institutions, community organizations and entities that will promote financial literacy.” M.G.L. c. 10, §35QQ(a).

The Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority (“MEFA”) is a body politic and corporate, constituting a public instrumentality of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The Authority was established in 1981 pursuant to the act codified as MGL Chapter 15C, as amended, to assist students, their parents and others responsible for paying the costs of education, as well as institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth and beyond in the financing and refinancing of the costs of education. MEFA’s mission is to increase access and promote affordability through education, college finance guidance, structured college savings programs, and low-cost financing strategies. MEFA remains true to its mission thirty years later, providing assistance to students and families as well as colleges and universities through MEFA’s programs and services dedicated to PLANNING, SAVING, and PAYING for college. In 2011, MEFA along with the Departments of Higher Education and Elementary and Secondary Education, launched the Commonwealth’s College and Career Web Portal; *YourPlanFortheFuture* (YPFF)

allowing all students across the Commonwealth access to the planning tools necessary to create a pathway to higher education.

To the respective legislatively mandated objectives, the FLTF Board and MEFA have recognized the importance of educating the Commonwealth's youth about financial literacy and therefore, the importance of procuring a financial education technology curriculum/module/tool targeting school-age children in public schools across the Commonwealth, utilizing the Commonwealth's college and career portal as the vessel to deliver a financial literacy curriculum to students and educators across the Commonwealth.

III. Background

Over the past two years, there has been a historical shift in financial literacy activity in Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Financial Literacy Trust Fund was established in 2011 (See M.G.L. c. 10, §35QQ(a)-(b). In March of that same year, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education published Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for Mathematics, augmented the references to financial literacy in the text of the Mathematics Frameworks with Guiding Principles to strengthen the connection to financial literacy in the new framework and affirmed that "students, pre-k to 12, will be expected to learn the mathematics concepts and skills necessary to make personal financial decisions and be financially literate. And MADESE adopted the Common Core Standards in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics and requested that financial literacy examples and applications be included in these standards. All districts were expected to align their curricula to the new standards by the start of the 2012-2013 school year. Furthermore, a Massachusetts 2012 budgetary statute establishes a three year financial literacy pilot program to be administered by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (See Section 200 (a), c.139 of the Acts of 2012.) This pilot program will involve ten high schools in gateway municipalities with implementation scheduled for the school year beginning in 2013. Sharing the goal of this convergence of financial literacy activities, the FLTF, together with MEFA have elected to identify a technology based, financial education teaching and learning tool that *is fun, interactive, and meets Massachusetts Education Curriculum Frameworks*.

Such a product will:

- Improve the ease of school systems-wide adoption of financial education
- Provide practical application of the Common Core State Standards.
- Improve educator confidence in delivering financial education
- Establish a state-wide delivery, collection and assessment of financial literacy among its Massachusetts youth and educator users.

Currently, 143 high schools (students, counselors and teachers) are using *YourPlanfortheFuture* as their school based college and career planning platform with the possibility of reaching 140,000 students in those schools. Many of these high schools are located in the Commonwealth's Gateway Cities. In addition, the launch of the Open Platform of YPFF in 2011 ensures that all families (students and parents as well as

educators) across the state have access to the technological planning tools necessary to create a pathway to higher education. In the winter of 2013 a middle school component will be introduced as a part of *YourPlanFortheFuture*.

IV. Goal

The objective of this RFI is to collect information that may, at a later date, be used as the basis for procurement to contract with a qualified, experienced organization capable of delivering a comprehensive, efficient, confidential, interactive and user-friendly web-based module or curriculum tool to assist K-12 students with learning important financial literacy skills and lessons. As envisioned the system would also be readily accessed to provide students and educators with “one-stop shopping” for online financial literacy resources. *YourPlanFortheFuture* would be the vessel for delivery of this electronic curriculum. Special emphasis would be placed on helping parents and students improve their understanding of the importance of preventing defaults on credit card debt and or college loans.

The product the FLTF and MEFA board will seek must:

- Establish a state-wide delivery, collection and assessment of financial literacy among Massachusetts youth and educator users
- Improve educator confidence in delivering financial education
- Make it easier for school systems to implement system-wide financial education
- Assist teachers with their efforts to implement the Common Core State Standards.

V. Technical Description of Existing Portal

YourPlanFortheFuture (YPFF) is a multi-lingual web-based platform allowing users a single sign-on, secure experience. The platform is hosted and monitored/maintained offsite by MEFA’s contractor 24/7 in partnership with a nationally recognized, SAS compliant provider using a cloud computing basis. Virtual servers allow for scalability and growth in the application and database as well as load-balancing systems. In addition, all routers and firewalls are maintained by MEFA’s contractor. The site is run through HTTPS access in a SSL protected environment and the use of WS-Security protected API access using SSL protected web services. Inclusive in this are SSL certificates, firewalls, multi-factor authentications, intrusion protection and virus protection. In addition one way encryption is used for storage of all passwords. YPFF is a series of applications and tools, primarily built in an ASP.Net environment using standard programming languages. The CMS is a custom system maintained by our developer. The platform allows for industry updates in both browser versions and programming languages. We have a change management system in place as well as back up procedures and a disaster recovery plan. Service Level Agreements are in place to ensure minimum downtime and maximum speed to the site. YPFF users utilize self-help features to create their accounts and passwords, which use multi-factor security following best practice rules. Sessions expire automatically due to inactivity and lockouts are performed after a determined number of failed login attempts. YPFF is a permission based platform offering multiple user-role profiles.

VI. **Information Solicited**

The FLTF and MEFA are seeking responses from parties who have expertise in web based financial education systems. For purposes of this RFI, the FLTF and MEFA are open to considering different options in building a financial education technology based solution including but not limited to Commercial Off-the-Shelf (COTS) software, systems fully custom-developed for the Commonwealth, and solutions based on systems currently in development or operating in other states or other relevant venues.

The system would have to support the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Mathematics and/or History/Social Sciences Educational Frameworks (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html>). The FLTF and MEFA anticipate that in addition to delivering financial literacy lessons to a diverse selection of schools throughout the Commonwealth and the public in general, the system will also accommodate student progress reports and assessments, data collection by age, grade level, geography for comparison purposes, and insure privacy protection for the users.

VII. **Submission Requirements or Meeting Request**

Please review Section VIII of this RFI, "Questions" and submit a response to each section (A-D) below. The page limits for each subsection are as follows:

- VIII.A – Content: five (5) pages or less;
- VIII.B – Ownership, Licensing Fees, Customization, & Ability to Brand: five (5) pages or less;
- VIII.C – System Administration, Report Generation, & Progress Testing: five (5) pages or less;
- VIII.D – Training: two (2) pages or less.

You may include marketing materials with your submission, which may be in addition to the above-referenced page-limits for each Section, but do NOT substitute marketing materials for your answers to these questions.

Your submissions should be e-mailed to Amelia Timbers, Legal and Financial Analyst, at procurements@tre.stae.ma.us by 4:00 p.m. EDT on Wednesday, November 29, 2012.

VIII. **Questions**

A. **Content**

The FLTF Board and MEFA envision the Commonwealth's College and Career Planning portal, *YourPlanFortheFuture* as the state wide gateway for providing access to financial literacy tools for all residents of the commonwealth. The desired financial literacy tools must meet Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) frameworks and have content that includes access to interactive components such as audio, video, games or quiz formats, screen casts, and offer an age appropriate fun and enjoyable experience. The content must also be

relevant to multiple customer groups (*i.e.*, children ages K-12, educators, and parents).

With these requirements in mind, please answer the following questions. **Please also limit your responses to this Section VIII.A to five (5) pages. You may include marketing materials with your submission, which may be in addition to the above-referenced page-limit, but do NOT substitute marketing materials for your answers to these questions.**

1. What financial literacy tools do you offer for providing K-3, K4-6, K7-8, K9-12, instructor led classroom learning experiences, delivered through desk top and/or hand held devices?
2. Can these lessons be delivered on a district wide basis, through a portal link, to all the schools within a district for those districts that opt in for online delivery of financial literacy tools?
3. On what existing state education portals, if any, are your financial literacy tools currently being used?
4. Do you offer online financial literacy tools to help parents of K-12 students teach financial literacy lessons to their children?
5. Do you offer online financial literacy tools for students looking to avail themselves of self-selected options for learning financial literacy lessons?
6. If the answer to question 5 is yes, will users be able to pause and bookmark their session so that it can be returned to later at the point they left off, and such that it allows random access to specific areas within a topic in non-sequential order?
7. Are any of your K-12 financial tools currently supporting state mandated core curriculum requirements for financial literacy, and if yes, where and please provide an example of how said states have incorporated their financial literacy tool into a classroom learning experience?
8. What financial tools do you offer for K13-20 students and their parents for career financial planning, debt awareness /debt management, and for understanding the impact of credit scores?
9. A growing trend in the country is to run “Credit for Life Fairs” (also referred to as “Youth Financial Education Fairs” and “Reality Fairs”) at high schools. Have you ever created an online version of the fairs?
10. Under the category of learning for life*, do you have financial literacy tools that could be offered statewide through a portal to all residents, in any of the following categories?
 - a) Income and Careers
 - b) Money Management
 - c) Credit and Debt Management
 - d) Planning, Saving, and Investing
 - e) Becoming a Critical Consumer
 - f) Civic Financial Responsibility

g) Risk Management and Insurance

**“Learning for Life” content should be consistent with federal initiatives for financial literacy.*

B. Ownership, Licensing Fees, Customization, and Ability to Brand

It is the intent of MEFA and the FLTF Board to make financial literacy tools available to the broadest possible audience, with little or no cost to the users.

Please limit responses in this Section VIII.B to no more than five (5) pages. While this RFI is seeking general information on cost structure and *pricing from prior delivered projects*, it is not seeking to have pricing for specific *going forward services*. ANY PRICE INFORMATION REQUESTED IN THIS RFI IS FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY.

1. Is it possible to outright purchase your financial literacy tool(s)? If the answer is no, what licensing options do you offer?
2. Will MEFA and/or the FLTF Board have the ability to customize user interfaces for MEFA/FLTF Board end-users?
3. Will MEFA and the FLTF Board have the ability to brand your financial literacy tools (user interfaces, reports, etc.) with MEFA and/ or FLTF Board brands?
4. What percent of your financial literacy tools are classified as COTS versus customized?
5. Based on your knowledge, expertise, services what could the FLTF Board and MEFA procure for use on the portal with a budget of the following ranges?
 - a) \$50,000- \$100,000
 - b) \$100,000 -\$150,000
 - c) \$150,000 -\$250,000
6. If your K-12 financial tools are currently supporting a state mandated core curriculum requirements for financial education (See Content section, Question #7), what was the cost of these individual programs as delivered?
7. Does your financial education tool update and keep data accurate and current? If so, are there costs associated with this function?

C. System Administration, Report Generation, and Progress Testing

Please limit responses in this Section VIII.C. to no more than five (5) pages.

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1. Can your financial literacy tool(s) interact with the MEFA portal in a way that will allow users to utilize single sign on for a seamless transition from one site to the other?
 2. Do your financial literacy tools provide integrated reporting capabilities, updated automatically, and accessible to the administrator in both data and graphical views, including the ability to generate custom reports?
 3. Will the financial tools support Web-based access to administrative features, data and reporting?
 4. Will administrators be able to create surveys or tests for the various customer categories that will use the financial literacy tool(s) offered through the portal?

D. Training

Please limit responses in this Section VIII.D to no more than two (2) pages.

1. Please describe the types of training that you could offer to portal administrators.
2. Please also describe how you would train the envisioned multiple levels of customers such as school districts, teachers/instructors, other system managers that would integrate with the portal, the public etc.

IX. Entities Eligible to Respond to the RFI

Any private sector entity, whether for profit or nonprofit, may respond to this RFI.

X. Future Procurement

This is not a Request for Responses or Request for Quote intended to commence a procurement. It is an information-gathering opportunity for the FLTF and MEFA as described above. Nothing in this RFI shall be interpreted as a commitment on the part of the FLTF or MEFA to enter a contract with any respondent or to make any procurement. Respondents to this RFI are not guaranteed in any way that they will secure a contract with the Commonwealth related to any procurement, or for any other purpose.

XI. Public Record

All written materials provided to the Commonwealth in connection with this procurement shall become public records pursuant to Mass. Gen. L. ch. 66, sec. 10, regardless of confidentiality notices set forth on such writings to the contrary.

XII. No Contractual Commitment

The Treasury, the FLTF and MEFA, collectively and independently, shall have no obligation to correct, nor bear any responsibility for, error (whether by commission or

omission), ambiguity or inconsistency in this RFI. If any respondent is aware of or believes that the RFI contains such an error, it is the respondent's responsibility to notify the Treasury on behalf of the FLTF and MEFA.

This RFI does not constitute an offer by the Treasury, on behalf of the FLTF or MEFA, or the FLTF or MEFA, independently, to contract, but rather represents a search for information and an invitation to respondents to submit a Response addressing the specified inquiries. This RFI seeks to establish a common framework within which the final terms of an RFR may be written. Issuance of this RFI, the respondent's preparation and submission of a Response, and the subsequent receipt and review of the Response by the Treasury, the FLTF, and/or MEFA, does not commit these entities to award a contract to any respondent. Only the execution of an agreement(s) will obligate the FLTF and MEFA or the Treasury to a contractual relationship, in accordance with the terms and conditions contained in such an agreement(s). Neither the contents of any submitted Responses, nor any subsequent material submitted in response to requests for additional information, will be considered offers to contract by respondents.

XIII. Costs

Each respondent, by submitting a Response, agrees that any cost incurred by it in responding to this request, or in support of activities associated with this RFI, shall be the sole responsibility of respondent. The Treasury, the FLTF and MEFA shall incur no obligations or liabilities whatsoever, to anyone, for any costs or expenses incurred by respondent in responding to this RFI.

XIV. Review Rights

Responses to the RFI may be reviewed and evaluated by any person(s) at the discretion of the Treasury, FLTF and MEFA, including staff of the FLTF, MEFA, and the Treasury, and any non-allied and independent consultants retained now or in the future, for the sole purpose of obtaining an analysis of Responses. Any and all respondents may be asked to further explain or clarify in writing areas of their Response during the review process. The FLTF and MEFA, as well as the Treasury if acting on their behalf, retains the right to request further information from respondents.

XV. RFI Process & Instructions

A. Response Content & Format

1. Response Content: Responses should include:
 - a. Answers to the questions set forth in section VIII herein.
 - VIII.A – Content: five (5) pages or less;
 - VIII.B – Ownership, Licensing Fees, Customization,& Ability to Brand: five (5) pages or less;

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- VIII.C – System Administration, Report Generation, & Progress Testing: five (5) pages or less;
 - VIII.D – Training: two (2) pages or less.

b. A brief one paragraph statement describing the Respondent.

2. Response Format: RFI responses must be submitted electronically to procurements@tre.state.ma.us. Please attach a cover sheet that states the respondent's name, title, organization, business address and telephone number. For electronic submission, the response should be in a format readable by Microsoft Word or in a PDF format.

Questions should be answered in the order of appearance and numbered according to the RFI question number. Again, you may include marketing materials with your submission, which may be in addition to the above-referenced page-limits for each Section, but do NOT substitute marketing materials for your answers to these questions. Responses should be clearly labeled and referenced by name in the RFI response. No part of the response will be returned to the respondent. Receipt of the RFI response will not be acknowledged.

B. Response Transmission & Schedule

Respondents must email written submissions to Amelia Timbers at atimbers@tre.state.ma.us by no later than 4:00 p.m. (EDT) November 29, 2012.

RFI Schedule	
Event	Date and Time
RFI Posted	October 19, 2012
Question Deadline	October 26, 2012
Answers Posted to Comm-Pass	October 31, 2012
Responses Due	November 29, 2012

C. Accessing the RFI

This RFI has been distributed electronically using the Commonwealth Procurement Access and Solicitation System (Comm-PASS). Comm-PASS is an electronic mechanism used for advertising and distributing the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' procurements and related files. No individual or organization may alter (manually or electronically) the RFI or its components except for those portions intended to collect the respondent's response.

Parties may access the Comm-PASS Vendor Information page from the following URL: <http://www.comm-pass.com>.

This RFI has also been posted on:

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- www.mass.gov/treasury/financial-education/financial-literacy-trust-fund/financial-literacy-trust-fund-board.

Questions on use of Comm-PASS should be directed to the Comm-PASS Help Desk at: Telephone: 1 (888) 627-8283, or (617) 720-3197; e-mail: Comm-PASS@osd.state.ma.us.

Parties are solely responsible for checking Comm-PASS for any addenda or modifications that are subsequently made to this RFI. The Treasury, the FLTF and MEFA, the Commonwealth and any of its subdivisions accept no liability and will provide no accommodation to parties who fail to check for amended RFIs.

D. Communication

1. Questions: Firms that have questions seeking clarifying information about this RFI may submit them via email to the Contact Person at procurements@tre.state.ma.us no later than the Question Deadline date. Answers will tentatively be posted to Comm-PASS by the Question Response Deadline date.
2. Communicate with Contact Person only: Firms that intend to submit a response are prohibited from contacting any employee of the FLTF, MEFA or the Treasury other than the contact person, Amelia Timbers, Legal and Financial Analyst, Treasury. Furthermore, no other employee or representative is authorized to provide any information or respond to any question or inquiry concerning this RFI. Respondents should notify the contact person in writing via email at procurements@tre.state.ma.us of any issues or questions regarding this RFI.